9 held in alleged plot to smuggle munitions

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NEW ORLEANS, La. (AP) — Federal officials said Sunday nine persons arrested in Texas and Louisiana were allegedly conspiring to smuggle munitions for the overthrow of a foreign country, presumably Cuba.

As the arrests were being made Saturday night, a DC-4 aircraft was seized in Shreveport, La., containing 16,500 pounds of plastic explosives, 2,600 electrical blasting caps, 7,000 feet of primacord and 25 electrical detonators.

Among those arrested were a prominent South Texas rancher-banker, and a former inspector with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. The two were arrested at Eagle Pass, Tex., where they lived.

Federal officials said approximately $465,000 was to be paid for the explosives and the cost of the plane trip to deliver them to a secret landing strip near Vera Cruz, Mexico.

U.S. Atty. Gerald Gallinghouse of New Orleans said the charges allege the explosives were to be sent to Mexico for "future trans-shipment to another country, presumably Cuba."

In addition, two of those arrested were charged with knowing "the material would be used in an attempted overthrow of a foreign nation."

Gallinghouse refused to say specifically that the nation to be overthrown was Cuba. But when asked about the two separate statements indicating Cuba, he said "that's self-explanatory."

Five persons were arrested at Shreveport and two in New Orleans. Among those arrested in New Orleans was Murray Kessler of Brooklyn, N.Y., identified in the complaint as the man who arranged to obtain the weapons for a man identified only as "Carlos Diaz."

All nine were charged with conspiring to smuggle munitions to Mexico.